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ABSTRACT

During an 8-month practicum, 41 mildly disabled high school students; their teachers, parents, and counselors; and community business representatives cooperated in defining individual school-to-work transition goals in educational, occupational/career, and social/personal areas. The major aim was to realistically and adequately prepare these special needs students for community life after exiting high school. Techniques used to achieve this goal included student and parent surveys; questionnaires; parent and teacher workshops; restructured curricula; cooperation of community, school, and itinerant personnel; and student-set goals. A review of the literature supports the techniques used. Expected outcomes were: (1) 5 of the 41 eligible students would be formally enrolled in a school-to-work program; (2) 20 of the 38 teachers and aides working directly with the 41 students would be able to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with the students' transitional plans; (3) parents of 22 of the 41 students would express satisfaction with the transitional plans; and (4) 16 of the 41 students would be able to share one educational, one career/occupational, and one social/personal transitional goal. All outcomes except number 2 were met; only 12 teachers indicated their ability to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with students' transitional plans. Contains 42 references. Appendices include sample surveys, checklists, and parent newsletters. (SAS)

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Improving the School to Work and Community Transition Program of 41 Mildly Disabled Secondary Students During Their Educational Careers in a Rural District Setting

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A Practicum II Report Presented to
the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

1997

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APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

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Approved:

Date of Final Approval of Report

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Abstract

Improving the School to Work and Community Transition Program of 41 Mildly Disabled Secondary Students During Their Educational Careers in a Rural District Setting. Miller, Janet E., 1997: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. High School/Secondary Education/Junior High School/Special Education/Special Needs Students/Parent-Teacher Cooperation/Teacher Workshops/Parent Workshops/Parent-Teacher Conferences/Regular Teacher-Special Education Teacher Cooperation/School to Work and Community Transitions

This practicum was designed to improve post high school transitions in the educational process of 41 secondary students who are mildly disabled by encouraging the students to actively participate in choosing transition goals across 3 major areas. The areas were educational, occupational/career, and social/personal. The major goal was to realistically and adequately prepare 41 students with special needs for community life after exiting high school.

The solutions applied to the problem consisted of students and parents completing surveys, questionnaires, and an interest inventory; parent and teacher workshops; involving relevant community, school, and itinerant personnel; restructuring existing curricula by incorporating relevant training, field trips, academic support, materials, and activities; finally, students chose goals that would ensure transitional post high school success. The solutions were implemented over an 8-month period.

The writer's findings support the hypothesis that with an on-going formal transition program, students can be prepared to successfully make the transition to post high school life. When curricula are transition-specific, but filled with options, and corresponding goals are relevant and appropriate, exiting students will be functional and more independent adults. The writer proposes that the solution strategies used can be a foundation for building a positive transition program in any secondary school.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Description of Community

The setting for this practicum was a small rural area located in a southeastern state. The town, once host to a thriving textile factory and largely supported by this industry, was still rebuilding from its loss. This factory was a major part of the community for many decades, contributing not only to the economic fiber of the community, but the social and the religious aspects of the community also revolved around the existence of the factory. Even though the factory had been closed for more than a decade, the town was still struggling for a strong identity separate from that created in conjunction with the factory.

According to the most recent and available county statistics (1994), single-parent homes dominated the area with a 65% representation. Only 18% of the local adult population had a post-high school education (NSSE, 1995-96). In dramatic contrast, 45% of the adult population had less than a high school education (NSSE). County statistics found that the poverty level for the area stood at 15%. The town had attracted several small industries and had an ongoing campaign to recruit other interested businesses. At that time, the town's largest employer was the local school district.

The writer's school district was situated on the outskirts of three counties. In-house records revealed that 44% of the population being served by the school district was from one county. The remaining 56% of the school's population came from the other two surrounding counties. The writer's work setting was a secondary public school. According

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to those same high school records, this district served a community population of 5,000. In total, there were four high schools located in the major county served by the writer's school. The writer's school was the smallest of the four schools.

Writer's Work Setting

The writer's school served 518 students from grades seven through twelve. There were 3 administrators, 38 teachers, and 11 clerical workers and aides employed on site. Of the 38 teachers, there was a traditional guidance counselor, a school to work counselor/guidance counselor, a mental health counselor, a learning assistant/social worker, a self-contained Trainable Mentally Disabled specialist, a self-contained Educable Mentally Disabled specialist, and the writer, a Special Education Resource specialist. According to in-house records, 88% of the teaching staff were certified in the area in which they were teaching. Additional itinerant staff of the on-site staff included, a district nurse, a part-time psychiatrist, a part-time psychologist, the area Vocational Rehabilitation facility and assigned counselor, an assigned team of counselors for Talent Search, a preventive teen pregnancy facilitator, a post-teen pregnancy facilitator, the local government's community involvement and awareness committee, area law enforcement self-esteem building programs (Bridges and Drug Awareness Resistance Education), and various awareness/self-esteem building programs offered by local church organizations.

The writer's work setting boasted a student/teacher ratio of 16 students to every teacher (NSSE,1995-96). The student population was 29% minority. Further, of the entire student population, 8.7% were identified as students with special needs and had Individual Educational Plans on file (NSSE). Thirty-four percent of the student population received either free lunches or reduced payment lunches.

Records verified that 15-20% of the students participated in vocational training classes each year. Although the state statistics reported a 6% drop-out rate, local records showed that between 30-40% of each graduating class pursues a post-high school

education. Follow-up revealed that 10% of each graduating class choose to enter the military on a full time basis (NSSE, 1995-96).

Writer's Role

The writer's principal role was to teach the learning disabled, the mildly educable mentally disabled, and the attention deficit hyperactive disordered at the secondary level in a resource setting. The writer holds a bachelors degree in Psychology and a masters degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Special Education. The writer had earned 30 hours above the masters in the area of Special Education and was certified to teach the educable mentally disabled and the learning disabled. The writer had attended certified workshops and participated in special training sessions to learn how to work effectively with the attention deficit hyperactive disabled. The writer's work experience included teaching the educable mentally disabled at the junior high level for five years and a behavioral disordered class at the high school level for one year in resource model settings. The writer had worked in the present situation at the secondary level for the last 14 years.

The writer taught a class of Teacher Cadets, which was comprised of 11th and 12th grade honor students who had expressed an interest in a career in the teaching profession. The writer had been and continued to be a sponsor of various clubs and organizations and had for the past 14 years worked directly with the general population of the student body. Additionally, the writer had enjoyed and continued to enjoy being a member of various professional teams and committees in the school system and the surrounding community.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in this practicum was that students were not being adequately prepared nor actively involved in realistic opportunities to help them live more productive lives after exiting high school.

Problem Description

The writer found that the current secondary special education curriculum was not an adequate preparation nor did it contain realistic or relevant opportunities to help students in their transitions from school to the workplace or community. Teachers expressed that they felt that the curricula was inadequate as far as preparing these students to realistically be ready for life after high school, but they did not adjust the curriculum to reflect a more adequate preparation. These same teachers revealed that they felt that the students would benefit from an individualized curriculum that was taught by a more specialized instructor.

During the course of a school year, the writer noted that several of the students with mild disabilities dropped out of school to find work. These students reported before leaving that the school was not preparing them for a useful career and they felt that they could immediately get jobs making enough money to support their needs without the help of the school. The writer further observed that students with special needs were not being counseled or offered special help to choose appropriate careers. Additionally, these

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students were not being made aware of educational or vocational options to be pursued after high school.

When questioned, parents were unaware of programs available through the school and community agencies that could help their children in their transition from school. The parents revealed to the writer that they were also apprehensive regarding the quality and relevance of the education that their children were receiving. A major focus in determining the worth of an education seemed to be whether or not the education could be transformed into financial gain for the recipient. The parents seemed to be seeking assurances that after school, their children would be able to be contributing members of society and not dependent upon society for their existence.

Many times, teachers lack training that enable them to adequately work with students to help students reach appropriate goals. As in this case, coupled with a lack of training, teachers seemed more comfortable delegating responsibility to someone that they felt was more qualified to perform the specified duty. As a result of not being exposed to relevant and realistic opportunities, students were frustrated and could not be convinced to proceed in what they regarded as a pointless direction. Parents, questioning the validity of the school's programs, not only would not support the school and the school authorities, but would eventually support the termination of their child's formal education. Presently, the school had no specific plan to train teachers, educate students, or inform parents of ways to make the transition from school to work and community be more effective, appropriate, and relevant for students with special needs.

Problem Documentation

During the course of the school year, teachers expressed doubt about the appropriateness of the curriculum as a foundation for the students with special needs to realistically build upon. The writer surveyed the faculty and staff to ascertain the degree of concern regarding this problem. When an informal survey was taken, all 38 of the teachers and aides who worked directly with the 41 students with special needs expressed

concern over the discrepancies between current curriculum goals and realistic future plans for these students.

In a survey where participants were chosen randomly, 10 of 38 members of the teaching faculty were assessed concerning the effectiveness of the Special Education Department program (see Appendix A). Responses to two of the eleven questions were pertinent to this practicum's problem of inadequate student preparation for transition. The questions were: Are there students with special needs in your classes and, if so, how many are there? and How many special education courses have you had? The responses revealed that teachers who had daily contact with students with special needs were not adequately trained to help these students reach optimum levels of success, neither academically or socially (see Table 1).

Table 1. Partial Results of Random Faculty Survey

Number of Respondents	Number of Special Course Taken	Number of Students With Special Needs In Classes	Number of Years Experience
1	0	0	2
2	0	8	18
3	0	0	20
4	5+	3	7
5	0	0	24
6	0	4	20+
7	1	12	26
8	0	3	24
9	5+	8	16
10	No Response	No Response	No Response

According to the results from an informal student survey, 25 of the 41 students expressed unrealistic educational, occupational, or social and personal goals. Students were dropping out of school, both physically and mentally, because they felt that their

classes were not relevant or useable for them. Additionally, according to school records, no student with special needs was formally enrolled in a "school to work" program. These students were not targeted to receive any special counseling, either formally or informally, that would help them make realistic choices for career directions or inform them of other viable school exit options.

Through interviews with the parents during the prior end of the year Annual Review meetings, parents expressed that they were most fearful about their students' immediate futures after high school. Parents had doubts about whether their children were learning anything that would help them get jobs or help them in their lives after they left school. The parents of the students did not seem to be aware of existing community programs, state or federal laws, or school programs that could help their children during their transition from school to work and community life.

Causative Analysis

The writer found several relevant and contributing causes to students with special needs not being appropriately prepared for transition from school to work and community. Specific information concerning this problem was gathered by reviewing school records, informal surveys, and interviews with teachers, students, and parents. Additional information was gathered from conversations with the school to work counselor and the regular guidance counselor. First, lack of allocated funds through the school's budget was a determining factor in providing adequate preparation for transition to work and community. Second, teachers not being aware of ways to incorporate transitional goals into the regular curriculum was another relevant cause for this problem. A third contributing factor for this problem was that parents were not aware of the specific laws that required adequate preparation of their adolescents. Fourth, parents needed specific training to enable them to help their adolescents prepare for life after high school. The fifth contributing factor that was hindering appropriate preparation for

transition was that students were not exposed to experiences that would help them to set better goals.

First, the school's budget not allowing for realistic transitional goal program implementation was a determining factor for adequately preparing students for post-high school life. Realistic transitional goals must include educational, vocational, recreational, social, and personal skill building experiences to address the needs of the student. Because of the rural area of the writer's work site, the economic status of many of the local families, and the lack of a public transit system, special provisions must be made to accomplish many of the transitional goals. The sights taken for granted by many must be planned and the acquired social graces second nature to others must be practiced by students with special needs. Some budget was necessary to help students transcend from school to the community.

The second cause that was a contributing factor was that teachers were not aware of various and innovative techniques that could be used with present curricula guidelines to help students more adequately prepare for life after high school. Teachers realized that curricula changes and adjustments should be made but hesitated to do so. Much of the hesitation was due to lack of knowledge, while some was due to misconceptions as to who was responsible for preparation of the students. The hesitancy on the part of the teacher for whatever reasons was having a devastating effect upon and would impact the entire life of the student with special needs.

Thirdly, parents were not aware of the specific laws that required adequate transition preparation of their adolescents and this was a contributing factor for the problem. When parents are aware of services, schools seem to find a way to make provisions. Interview results revealed that parents felt once their student left high school it would be up to the parent to guide the student through job hunting, agency services, and job training. Parents were not aware of services that should be provided for their child

before leaving high school to prepare him or her for the transition period, nor did they seem aware of eligibility for any continuing services when needed.

The fourth contributing factor for this problem of inadequate transitional services for students was that parents were in need of specific training that would enable them to help their adolescents become more prepared for post-high school futures. Parents expressed a desire to help direct their children, but admitted to feelings of inadequacy in helping them make choices. Parents readily admitted that they were unaware of today's career options. Parents also admitted that they feel unprepared for the technological future for themselves and felt totally confounded when their students spoke to them of goals that involved any aspect of technology.

Finally, the fifth factor that contributed to the problem was that students were not exposed to experiences that would ensure more realistic goal-setting. Students had expressed through interviews with the writer that current curricula objectives were inappropriate and irrelevant to their needs. Students desired part-time jobs or training to prepare them to adequately provide for their future needs. Because of prior academic stress and sometimes failure, students with special needs will oftentimes strive to excel in other areas that are not considered assets by some teachers. The students will sometimes cultivate talents utilizing manipulative skills that require advanced tactile-kinesthetic ability. These skills can be assessed as prerequisite job training skills.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The literature indicated that there is a problem with appropriate post-high school transitional services for students with special needs. Those responsible should develop and implement relevant goals so that these students can realize success throughout their lives. Frieberg (1995), Kleinhammer-Tramill, Rosenkoetter, and Tramill (1994), and Smith and Rojewski (1993) stipulated that through public laws, specifically, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Part H of the IDEA, the School to Work Transition program, students with

special needs have the right to expect and receive appropriate transitional services. Winters and Scoll (1993) stressed that in keeping with Goals 3 and 5 of the National Education Goals 2000 project, every student will be prepared for life after high school through appropriate interaction of education and businesses. These goals can be interpreted as another avenue to provide appropriate transitional services for exiting students. However, as an example of not fulfilling the requirements of the law and as reported by Bedini, Bullock, and Driscoll (1993), research revealed that although Public Law 101-476 (IDEA) provides students with disabilities the right to leisure opportunities during transition from school to post-high school life, these students are receiving very little organized instruction or direction for such activities.

In view of traditionally identified stress factors associated with the developing adolescent and the need to adapt to newly identified or unidentified stressful situations, Hamburg and Takanishi (1989) suggested there is an organized drive to assist adolescents, parents, and the public in aiding adolescents to better prepare for life's transitions. Flynt, Wood, and Scott (1992) also agreed with the research that proposes families, especially mothers of children with mental retardation, experience an immense amount of stress during transitional periods, particularly if transition is delayed or non-existent. Wienke, Coombe, and Platt (1994) listed additional specific difficulties inherent to rural areas that cause more stress for resident adolescents.

According to Price, Johnson, and Evelo (1994, p. 82), because of psychosocial issues such as "feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, isolation, frustration, anger, hostility, shyness, excessive dependency, low self-esteem" and chronic low level depression, adolescents with learning disabilities must be provided assistance in accommodating these issues throughout transitional periods. Spencer, Swanson, and Cunningham (1991) believe that identity, routinely questioned by all adolescents, becomes even more questionable for some adolescents during transitional periods particularly when these adolescents represent different cultural and ethinical groups. Sometimes students with

physical disabilities, in conjunction with mental and behavioral disabilities, require more caution when accommodations are being provided. According to findings from Luckner (1994), there is a greater possibility of fostering dependent behaviors and irresponsibility in students with hearing problems.

Hagen and Wheaton (1993) found research that indicates a range of activity experienced during adolescence can be potentially detrimental to success as an adult. Other research reported by Lichtenstein (1993) shows that students with learning disabilities are at greater risk of being unsuccessful in the work place and community after high school than the average adolescent. A study conducted by Karge, Patton, and de la Garza (1992) revealed that even though there were youth with mild disabilities employed, a greater number were not fully employed. Additionally, of the youth that were employed, a greater number were not prepared to advance in employment and were working for less than minimum wage when compared to their non-disabled counterparts. After completing a fact finding follow-up study, Chadsey-Rusch, Rusch, and O'Reilly (1991) reported similar findings. Arum and Shavit (1995) suggests that for those students who do not show or express an interest in attending college or post-secondary school, a vocational secondary education will increase the chances for skillful, specific, and higher paying employment immediately following high school.

Day (1992) offered data that supports the theory that an exclusive educational-based curriculum of transitional goals will have limited effects especially for sexual socialization preparedness with youth. Considering that during transitions, adolescents are greatly influenced by their immediate and personal realm of adult figures, Brewster, Billy, and Grady (1993) feel that adolescents sexual behaviors may still be positively influenced by others if a multilevel approach is enacted. Some controls must be exerted over the sexual behaviors of adolescents because the consequences of allowing sexual freedom can only lead to early and often unexpected parenthood. Ketterlinus, Lamb, and Nitz (1991) believe coupled with the expected stressors of the average adolescent, teenage

parenthood offers an added dimension of stress to this transitional period. Proponents and researchers agree, report Schloss, Alper, and Jayne (1993), that if self-determination skills are taught, persons with disabilities will be better able to adjust during transition from school to work and community life.

The literature revealed a number of causes of this problem. Although the law stipulated transitional needs be met for students beginning at age 14 when warranted, specific guidelines were slow to come and no extra funding was allocated. This contributed greatly to the inability to provide appropriate transition services for adolescents. Franklin and Streeter (1995) related that a lack of collaboration between school personnel and agencies has contributed serious social problems for families and children. The authors feel that this deficiency has hampered the social and behavioral growth of those individuals.

According to Glover and Marshall (1993), the American educational system has no organized or proven process to help adolescents transition from school to employment. Elford (1993) reported that less than half of the high school students go on to attend college, however, most of the budget is directed toward this group. Additionally, he maintained, the bulk of the curriculum goals and much of the attention is directed toward this same college-tracked student. On the other hand after earnest educational efforts were made, Shapiro and Lentz (1991) shared follow-up studies that reveal training which students receive in vocational or technical programs many times does not translate into acceptable employment or wages comparable with that training.

Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman, and Midgley (1991) believe that young adolescents' self-perceptions can negatively influence behavioral adjustments during transitional periods. Furthermore, they feel that when the young adolescents are left to chance with no planned program to compensate for these weaknesses the success of the maturing adolescents can be affected. These negative self-perceptions can have a greater impact on the student with special needs. Lichtenstein (1993) suggests many students

with special needs see dropping out of school as a more acceptable alternative than remaining in school and being subjected to more failure and embarrassment.

When possible, responsible persons should influence and monitor adolescents who work while attending school. Bachman and Schulenberg (1993) found that part-time employment of adolescents can contribute negatively to the immediate future of adolescents. They emphasized that every effort should be made to match ability and interests. They also cautioned that working too many hours could prove to be a negative contributing factor for these adolescents.

The literature review indicated that there is a problem with appropriate transition services. Not only did the review document a need for greater support, it also revealed several causes for inadequate transitional services for adolescents. Though many programs are being scrutinized and found to have inadequacies, it appeared that most educational systems realize that they are responsible for a transition plan for their students and are at least searching for an acceptable plan.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Exceptions

The goal of the practicum was that students with special needs would be realistically and adequately prepared for community life after exiting high school.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Outcome 1: Five of the eligible 41 students with special needs will be formally enrolled in a school to work program as measured by a checklist.

Outcome 2: Twenty of the 38 teachers and aides who work directly with the 41 students who have special needs will be able to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with the students' transitional plans as measured by a checklist.

Outcome 3: Parents of 22 of the 41 students with special needs will express satisfaction with the proposed transitional plans as measured by an informal survey.

Outcome 4: Sixteen of the 41 students with special needs will be able to share one educational, one career/occupational, and one social/personal transitional goal as measured by a checklist.

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Measurement of Outcomes

Outcome 1 was measured by a checklist (see Appendix B). The checklist was completed by the school to work counselor. The checklist was kept as evidence of the student's attendance and the type of services received from the counselor. Participating students and counselor signed the checklist form at the end of the program. This goal was considered met if the student was a participant in the program for at least half of the enrolled sessions and received a satisfactory assessment from the school to work counselor.

Outcome 2 was measured by a checklist (see Appendix C). The checklist began with three open-ended statements. The first statement was completed by the student. The last two statements were to be completed by the regular content area teacher and the special education resource teacher (the writer). In reality, the special education teacher (the writer) completed the checklist for the regular content area teachers by using the curriculum guidelines from each course. At this time, most of the students with special needs in the school to work transition program were also enrolled in the Mathematics and English Technical Programs (as opposed to the College or Honors programs). The Technical Program goals strive to help prepare students for the immediate post high school job placement.

As a component of the teachers open-ended statements, the dates worked on the goals and the final assessment score were also to be completed by the regular content area teacher. In this case, the dates worked on the goals were not included and the final assessment was the final grade earned by the enrolled student. Participating students and teachers were initially expected to sign the form at the end of the program. However, since all of the students were officially enrolled in at least English and Math classes and the content area teacher was not actively involved with the forms, the writer decided to use the assessment (final) grades as evidence of regular classroom participation. The student was also to be exposed to the correlating objectives at least six times. Also since

the regular teachers did not participate in this outcome in the projected manner, the number of times the students were exposed to the curriculum objective could not be adequately measured. The outcome was considered met if the student scored a 70% or more on each individual curriculum objective at its final assessment.

Outcome 3 was measured by an informal parent survey (see Appendix D). The parent survey consisted of five yes/no answers. The survey could be administered orally by the teacher or the parent could complete the survey alone. Time for administration should have been less than five minutes. Answers to the first three questions should have been yes. The last two answers could have been correct with either a yes or no. The writer felt that strides were made toward the positive if 3 of the 5 questions were answered in the affirmative. Since this was a survey there could be no specific pass/fail criteria. Participating parents had the option of signing the survey.

Outcome 4 was also measured by a checklist (see Appendix E). The checklist began with three open-ended statements. These statements were completed by the students with assistance from the special education resource teacher (the writer). The second half of the checklist was basically record keeping and was completed by the resource teacher. The student received credit for this outcome if the final assessment score measuring the appropriateness and retention of the goals was at least 67%. Participating students and the teacher signed the checklist form.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Statement of Problem

The problem to be solved in this practicum was that students were not being adequately prepared nor actively involved in realistic opportunities to help them live more productive lives after exiting high school.

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Students can be prepared to compete in the job market by teachers who have been properly trained and use a successful transition program reported Elford (1993), Smith and Rojewski (1993), and Pauly, Knopp and Haimson (1994). Follow-up studies show that students with special needs have more difficulties and less success in making the transition from school to community life. However, Chadsey-Rusch, Rusch, and O'Reilly (1991) outlined variables that link students with special needs to success during this period. Because of diverse needs, aptitudes, interests, and backgrounds, Edgar, Parker, Siegel, and Johnson (1994) and Carnevale and Porro (1994) stressed that students should have curriculum options. Authorities planning transition for students with special needs must look at the program and, as suggested by D'Alonzo and Giordano (1994), include basic intervention skills as indicated by individual needs. These authors suggested that much thought be given to a life-span approach for the student.

Shapiro and Lentz, Jr. (1991) agree that transitional programs should offer training to adolescents that can be beneficial and specific to career options after high school. Miller, Corbey, and Asher (1994) compiled results from a conference and report

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that a main reason for the under representation of students with disabilities in post-secondary education institutions appeared to stem from lack of knowledge concerning post-secondary educational options. Even when students are enrolled in an appropriate vocational curriculum, they are sometimes isolated from any other program that the school offers. Hoachlander (1995) cautions that if related employment can not be found or if there is failure to complete the course of study satisfactorily, the isolated student has no immediate alternatives. Transition for the student is interrupted or impaired.

Lichtenstein (1993) cautions that Individual Educational Program's (IEPs) should be realistic, relevant, and appropriate in order that adolescents with special needs can realize their full potential. Brolin, Cook, and O'Keefe (1994) feel that not only should IEPs be appropriate and teachers properly trained, but teachers should also be willing to initiate curriculum changes or modifications to ensure the curriculum has relevancy for students. In a commentary by Navarrete and White (1994), attention is drawn to the fact that many students from a wide variety of backgrounds are usually represented in rural area schools. Keeping this in mind, the authors suggest that the multidisciplinary team interpreting results and making recommendations for these students with special needs meet specific criteria concerning multicultural awareness and an appreciation for cultural differences.

Services from agencies and public schools, note Franklin and Streeter (1995), should be correlated in order that optimal results can be achieved for adolescents exiting high school. The Goals 2000 program and the School to Work program make a special effort to involve the business community in the educational preparation of today's students. When students are in need of social services during transition periods, government agencies that supply these services can be contacted, thereby avoiding duplication which would be a waste of time and money. Most services to help adolescent parents, discovered Ketterlinus, Lamb, and Nitz (1991), center around the mother and her child. They propose, however, that more positive results might be realized if the mother's

entire family were targeted. Elrod, Devlin, and Obringer (1994) maintain that involving the entire family throughout the adolescent's with special needs transition plan is mandatory in the rural school district. Elrod et al. listed components that should be included to ensure a more successful program for rural students.

Steinberg, Fegley, and Dornbusch (1993) recommended that adolescents being placed at part-time jobs should have their working hours controlled. They felt that with this technique a healthier balance could be maintained between school and work. Steitz and Owen (1992) maintain that there is a direct relationship found between girls who participate in school activities, work minimal hours at a part-time job and their self-esteem levels. According to Green (1990), adolescents who have been matched to part-time jobs by ability, aptitude, and interest can prove to have the most meaningful future work careers. In a similar study assessing the degree part-time jobs impact future work careers with all male adolescents as subjects, Klerman and Karoly (1994) found the same results.

Leisure education, suggest Bedini, Bullock, and Driscoll (1993), should be taught in conjunction with the regular special education curriculum. Leisure is a life time function or a specific skill that can bring contentment and enjoyment throughout every forthcoming transition period. During some transition periods appropriate leisure activities will perhaps sustain these adolescents. Bedini et al. feel that there would be a smoother transitional adjustment for students who are labeled Mentally Disabled if this skill were taught. Less formal effort may be needed with students who have mild disabilities, but appropriate leisure activities are important enough to be included in the overall transition program.

Schloss, Alper, and Jayne (1993) supplied research that revealed many adolescents lack self-determination skills that could help them make better choices during this critical transition period. By exposing students to relevant educational and career options and teaching them to employ reasoning skills when faced with choices, Martin,

Oliphint and Weisenstein (1994) believe that students with disabilities can learn to be self-determined. Each success during this transition practice will help the student grow in confidence. Martin et al. propose that confidence will breed greater decision-making skills and eventually, greater independent behavior.

After reviewing the literature, the writer concluded that a more appropriate transition program for adolescents would be established within the writer's work setting. This program would be meaningful, effect change, and propel all participants toward successful outcomes. Several ideas were generated as a result of reviewing the literature.

Schools and agencies should work together to provide the student and the student's family with services that would promote positive transition from school to work and community. Commensurate with individual needs, aptitudes, interests, backgrounds and goals, school authorities should encourage students to pursue appropriate careers. Additionally, curricula should provide academic as well as vocational options, opportunities to enhance decision-making skills, and appropriate leisure awareness for adolescents approaching transition.

It was vital for the success of the transition program and the success of the student's transition process that the lack of funding not become a deterrent for implementation. Creative bargaining, cooperative programs, and creative thinking were alternatives that were attempted. Teachers should be trained and have access to programs, materials, and resources geared to their specific student population. Every effort was made to match adolescents with work opportunities and job shadowing opportunities according to individual differences and interests. When possible, adolescents working at part-time jobs were counseled by authorities who sought to monitor and exert some control or influence over the hours the adolescents worked per week.

The recommendations generated through reviewing the literature all reflected the goal of providing for a more appropriate and relevant transition process for the exiting high school student. The literature reviewed also revolved around the theme that

transition should begin early and continue until the adolescent has realized stability in the community.

The solutions appeared appropriate, economical, and relevant to the needs of the students with disabilities. The time that was required to implement this program was not out of proportion with any other goals set forth by the curricula of the school. A minimal transportation budget, creative thinking, and cooperation with the business, agency, and education community was required to provide the field trip portion of this curriculum. The materials required were on site or were solicited from surrounding businesses.

Staff involvement was critical to the success of the program. Participation of the regular teachers of the students with special needs was requested. The writer professionally and tactfully approached, explained, and then gave detailed instructions to these regular teachers. If the teachers showed reluctance toward participating at any requested time, the writer did not pressure for participation. In lieu of the regular teacher's participation, that specific activity was performed by the writer. The writer made a conscious effort to not overburden the teachers with extra responsibilities in order to ensure that their cooperation could be positively gained. The special education department staff members indicated their cooperation at the outset of the program. However, their eagerness in participating waned toward the end of the program. The writer is pleased to report that the administrators were a positive supporting factor throughout the program.

Description of Selected Solutions

The writer was prepared to try several activities that would provide students with special needs appropriate transition opportunities. After analyzing the reviewed solutions, the writer decided that the following combination of ideas would be most practical and produce greater success in the rural work site of the writer.

At the beginning of the school term, the writer provided a questionnaire to be completed by the parent at home and a questionnaire to be completed by the student in the

classroom (Mitchell, 1979). The results were used to clarify expectations of the parent and the student. As a result of compiled information, student and corresponding families were referred and encouraged to participate in more specific counseling, if this was indicated.

The writer planned to hold a staff workshop to inform teachers and staff of transition goals of students. The workshop was initially planned to include the entire faculty because the writer felt that all could benefit. However, in reality, the writer was only able to speak with the teachers who were in the most direct contact with the students with special needs. This was done on a one to one basis as the teachers came to discuss each students' Individual Education Plan (IEP). A discussion with the teachers concerning responsibilities and techniques that could be utilized to help students reach transition goals took place. Appropriate classroom content-related curriculum suggestions for each teacher's use were provided. The writer also suggested and encouraged the inclusion of such suggestions within the standard curriculum.

The writer planned an after school workshop for parents to discuss the high school special education curriculum, the requirements for being successful at the secondary educational level, and the options available to help students be successful during transition from school to work and community life. When queried by the writer, only four parents indicated that they were in need of this service. As a result, this was done on an individual basis. At the annual Parent/Teacher Conference Day, the writer discussed the specific proposed transition plans of each corresponding student with the parents. A monthly newsletter was prepared and distributed to parents informing them of current curriculum goals chosen by their student and being pursued at that time (see Appendix F). Also included in the newsletters, if pertinent, were suggestions on how parents could work with the school to help attain the goals.

The writer had the students complete a career interest inventory. The inventory results were invaluable when counseling the student toward the pursuit of realistic

career/personal/educational options. The writer worked diligently with the "school to work" counselor and other appropriate staff members to enroll the students with special needs in formal school and local employment programs that would enhance transition from school to work and community. Students were strongly encouraged toward participation in appropriate extra-curricular activities as well as minimal part-time employment. In addition, the writer worked closely with the counselors and any related or identified agencies so optimal results would be realized for participating students.

The existing special education curriculum was restructured to incorporate and emphasize the teaching of self-determination skills, leisure education, and viable career options. Through these efforts, the students with special needs could become more aware and have the capability of making better choices from the available options throughout all future transitional periods. Finally, the writer exposed the secondary students with special needs to relevant real-life experiences that might be encountered during the immediate transitional phase from school to work and community. This was accomplished through the use of field trips, computer games, videos, guest speakers, role plays, and classroom teacher-generated activities.

The solutions were chosen for several reasons. First, the solutions could be implemented fully within the eight month practicum implementation period. Second, the solutions seemed most effective to address the stated problem. Third, the solutions appeared to be most appropriate for the described setting, participants, and resources.

Selected representatives were invited from local businesses, agencies and the surrounding community to participate throughout the implementation of the practicum. Administrators, colleagues, and parents of the school's general population were encouraged to participate. The writer served as the major facilitator for each event during implementation.

Report of Action Taken

Participants during the eight month implementation period began with 45 targeted secondary students, their parents, selected members of the faculty and staff, selected members of the local businesses and community, and selected representatives from the surrounding post-high school educational facilities. (The numbers of the participating students and parents fluctuated because of several students moving in and out of the district, dropping out of school, or being newly placed within the special program during the school year. The participating numbers ranged from 45 at the inception of the program to 29 participants enrolled in the participating regular Special Education programs at the end of the practicum.) Other participants also included the district's Special Education Department as well as any supporting personnel. The writer, also a participant, held the main facilitating role for each event throughout the implementation period.

During week one of the practicum implementation, the writer submitted the approved practicum proposal to the principal and the district special education coordinator for permission to implement. These supervisors offered no suggestions for improvements to the plan and permission to implement was granted. No additional materials, supplies, or facilities would be needed, however, financial assistance was requested to complete the field trips that were planned during the implementation.

Additionally, at this time, professional support was solicited from the regular content area teachers having direct contact with the targeted students and other specifically identified colleagues whose help was needed to fulfill the practicum outcomes. The writer had planned to meet with these colleagues during a faculty meeting, however, after the meeting was canceled for the second time, the writer decided to meet with the regular teachers on an individual basis as they came to read, sign, and discuss the educational plans of the students we had in common. The requested support was needed to ensure that the targeted students' transitional programs would enhance their educational

programs. The writer explained that at any time during the year, input from the faculty and staff was not only requested, but would be encouraged, and welcomed at any point.

The Special Education teachers with the writer's school were eager to participate at this point and suggested a district department meeting to discuss implementation on a district-wide level. The regular teachers were not as emphatic about participating. The overall consensus seemed to be that they felt uncomfortable or lacked the necessary skills to make individual decisions regarding transitional goals. A further consensus seemed to be that they would be glad to help the writer with whatever was planned by the writer. The parent and student surveys were prepared for later distribution. These would be used to identify the needs, expectations, and goals of the parents and the students. A materials list of transition items on hand was also prepared for later distribution.

Week two began the academic portion of the transition program. Reading activity book, CAREERS: EXPLORATION AND DECISION, (Chapters 1, 4, 5, and 9.), Steck-Vaughn workbook-A, HOW TO GET A JOB AND KEEP IT, (Unit 1-Unit 4), Steck-Vaughn workbook-B, LIFE SKILL'S FOR TODAY'S WORLD, (Unit 1), and THE CAREER BOX were used to introduce and discuss the major background skills that would form the basis for the occupational/career portion of the transitional program. The academic background instruction was covered over a 13-week period during the first five months of implementation.

During week two, the writer also began working on the upcoming after school workshop that was planned to inform parents of school information that would enable their young adults to be more successful in their transitions from school into the community. At this time, a school department special education faculty meeting was held to share ideas and solicit input regarding the upcoming workshop for the parents. It was at this meeting that the other department teachers decided that they would not participate in this upcoming workshop. They felt that they had no parental support for such a workshop. The writer also met with the special education teachers during the next week and,

thereafter, once a month to discuss, coordinate, adjust, and re-adjust plans or issues as they surfaced.

Beginning with the third week of implementation throughout the 25th week of implementation, the writer conducted periodic meetings with pertinent staff and faculty members at the writer's work site. Originally, these meetings were to ensure that the stated transition plans from the special program and the academic plans of the regular content area teachers' curricula continued to be smoothly coordinated and carried through. These meetings turned out to be vital because of the writer having to match the academic objectives to the chosen transitional objectives for the students with special needs within each content area class. The writer, not being a content area specialist, was unsure of the choices made and needed to monitor the situation closely so that changes could be made as quickly as deemed necessary.

Meetings with the driver education instructor and the athletic department coordinator were held to discuss the needs and abilities of the students with special needs who were enrolled in these specific programs. Specific problems were identified and various solutions were pondered until the problems were solved. For example, students with special needs, and having low reading ability, needed more individual help with the reading material in the driver education book. This was a serious problem for the teacher and the students. The solution was that a CD-ROM disc filled with driving action and situations to correspond with the reading would be used. The athletic director reported that the students were being exposed to lifetime leisure activities in as much as the budget would provide. The writer decided that the leisure activities planned during the field trip portion of the transition program would be stressed by the writer as lifetime positive physical activities.

During weeks eight and nine, the parent and student surveys were distributed. Parents and students returned the surveys and the results were compiled. Along with the surveys, a notice of intent to attend (invitations) the after school information workshop

was sent home to the parents. Only four parents returned the attached form indicating their interest in attending. It was decided that these four interested parents would be contacted and supplied information on an individual basis.

An interest inventory was also completed by the students in the writer's class . With this information, the school to work counselor began working with five identified and eligible students. Prepared suggestions of transition goals correlated with academic goals that could help classroom teachers assist students with special needs were dispersed. The school to work counselor and the regular teachers were to work with the targeted students for the remainder of the program in their respective capacities. The writer met with both the counselor and the teachers on a regular basis throughout the program to remain informed.

Beginning with week 14, the writer prepared monthly newsletters for distribution to the students' parents. These newsletters were to keep the parents apprised of the students' progress, any relevant news occurring in the classroom, and with the transition program. During week 16, the writer carried out an organized program for parents on the annual Parent/Teacher Conference Day. Discussed were transitional goals (educational, career/occupational, and personal) identified by the student, some of the information to be discussed at the planned information workshop (mentioned by the writer earlier), the student's academic and overall progress, and a discussion involving the expectations of the parents and how these expectations correlated with the expectations of their student. At this time, the writer shared plans developed for the year to help students reach the projected transitional goals. Input from parents was elicited and parents were asked to sign parent permission slips giving their student permission to participate in the travel (field trips) portion of the program.

The field trips included trips to the county library (library cards), motor vehicle department (driver's permits), vocational rehabilitation school, vocational and career school, a technical (Junior College) school, mobile home business, a factory that

manufactures medical products, the YMCA, a county bowling alley, the lake, and the local park (cook-out, fishing, and swimming). The trip to the state zoo was canceled because of lack of interest. Speakers during the transitional program included the school to work counselor, the mayor, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, an on-site educational visit from the county health department (came two days and completed two workshops, supplied four speakers), Operation Get Smart (a state program comprised of inmates from the state penal system), and a law official (a former student of the writer).

The writer used relevant videos and CDs to enhance each identified goal area of the transition program. They were used at appropriate times during the practicum. Guest speakers were also an integral part of the program. Speakers were used to introduce, clarify, and/or reiterate a transition skill. Finally, but just as importantly, field trips to community agencies, educational facilities, businesses, and social functions were completed. This was done so that the students' IEP would be completely beneficial to them.

At the end of the practicum, parents were asked to complete a questionnaire indicating their level of satisfaction with the year's transition program. Out of the parents of the 45 participating students, 29 students were still actively enrolled at the end of the practicum. Of these 29 students, 22 parents returned the completed questionnaire forms to the writer. All 22 forms showed an overwhelming satisfaction level for the transition program. Additionally, at the end of the year's Annual Review meetings, existing transition plans, as well as, future transition plans were discussed with the parents. All of the parents expressed verbal satisfaction and agreement for existing and future transition plans. The students lost to the writer's special education program due to alternative school placement, relocation, and truancy, all left with appropriate transition plans as a permanent part of their IEPs.

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Chapter V: Results

Results

The writer found that students with special needs were not being adequately prepared nor actively involved in realistic opportunities that would help them live more productive lives after exiting high school. These students were not being encouraged to set realistic educational, career/occupational, or personal goals that would enhance their futures. Additionally, the students were not being formally and systematically exposed to practical opportunities that would shape these decisions and help them become more viable members of their communities.

The solution strategies that were chosen were implemented over a period of eight months. These strategies consisted of parent and student completing surveys to clarify expectations and directions, separate information workshops for teachers and parents, regular contact with teachers and staff members, completion of a career interest inventory by the student, using the services of the school to work counselor, correlation of academic goals to transition goals where possible, regular newsletters to parents, appropriate field trips, relevant speakers, and relevant academic instructions and materials (books, CDs, videos). The goal of the practicum was that students with special needs would be realistically and adequately prepared for community life after exiting high school.

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Outcome 1: Five of the eligible 41 students with special needs will be formally enrolled in a school to work program as measured by a checklist.

This outcome was met.

Six of the eligible 41 students with special needs were formally enrolled in a school to work program. There were seven students who initially met all of the program's criteria for eligibility. One of the students declined entry. One of the eligible students was

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dismissed early in the program because of repeated misconduct. The school to work counselor completed the checklist indicating their progress. Five students completed the program.

Outcome 2: Twenty of the 38 teachers and aides who work directly with the 41 students who have special needs will be able to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with the students' transitional plans as measured by a checklist.

This outcome was not met.

Twelve teachers indicated their ability to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with the students' transitional plans.

Outcome 3: Parents of 22 of the 41 students with special needs will express satisfaction with the proposed transitional plans as measured by an informal survey.

This outcome was met.

Parents of 22 of the 41 students with special needs expressed satisfaction with the completed transitional plans. The parents indicated their satisfaction by completing a written survey and returning it to the writer.

Outcome 4: Sixteen of the 41 students with special needs will be able to share one educational, one career/occupational, and one social/personal transitional goal as measured by a checklist.

This outcome was met.

Twenty-nine of the 41 students with special needs were able to share one educational, one career/occupational, and one social/personal transitional goal. This outcome was measured by a checklist completed by the writer. (See Tables 2 and 3, Figure 1 for visuals of Outcomes 1 - 4.)

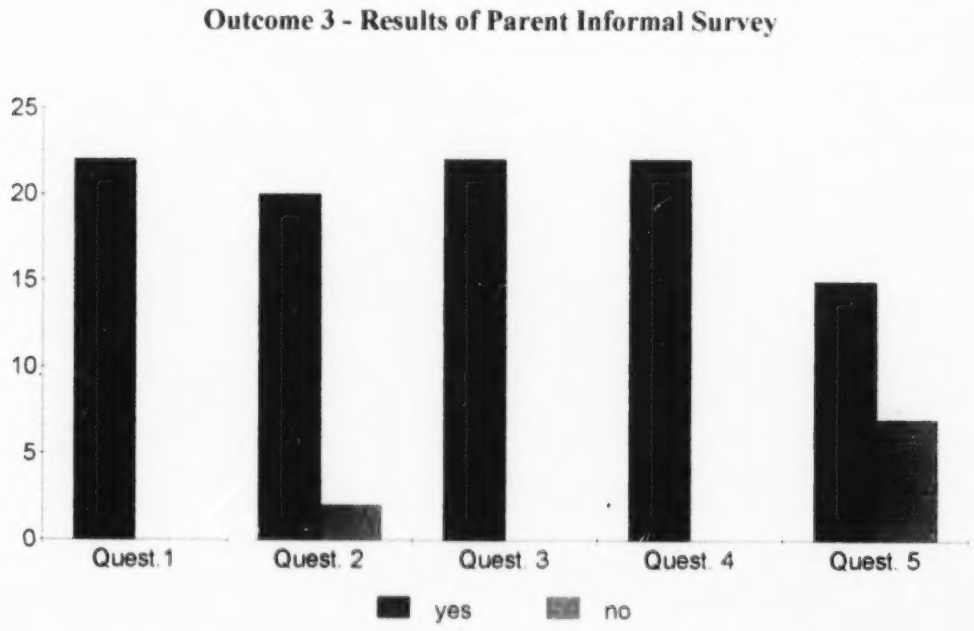
Table 2. Outcome 1 - School to Work Program

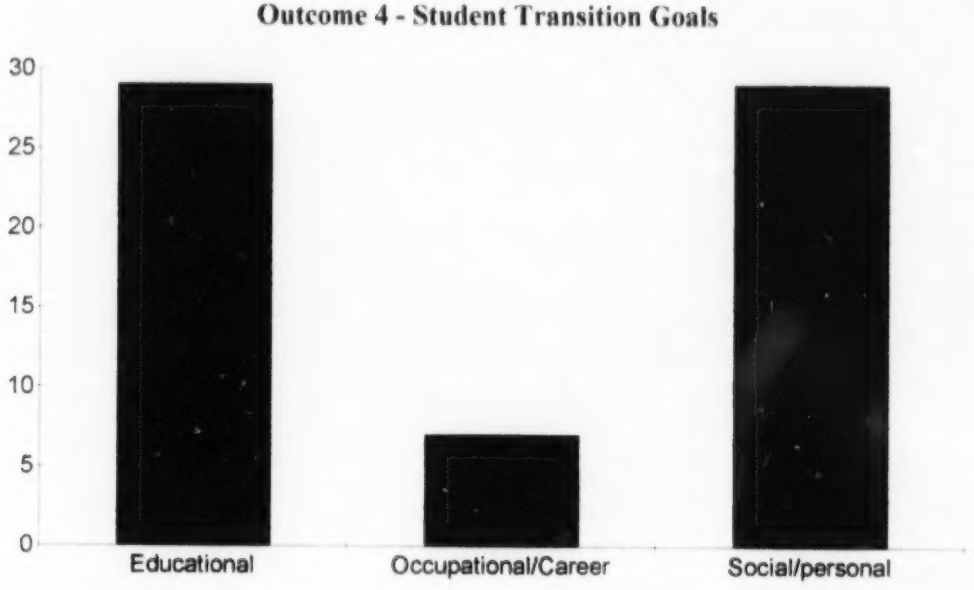
Activity	Completed Activity
Attendance	5
Career Counseling	5
Related Field Trips	4
Job Training	5
Job Shadowing	2

Table 3. Outcome 2 - Teacher Checklist Transition/Content Correlation

Category	Projected Data	Actual Resulting Data
Overall Teacher Involvement	20/38	12/38
Student Results 70% Minimum (x 2)	82	62
Exposure to Goals Correlation	6 times	unknown

Figure 1. Visuals for Outcomes 3 - 4





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Discussion

The goal of this practicum was that students with special needs would be realistically and adequately prepared for community life after exiting high school. There were four outcomes stipulated in this practicum to help reach this goal. Of these four outcomes, only three were met. Nevertheless, the writer felt that the practicum was very successful.

Outcome one was met. Six of the eligible 41 students with special needs were formally enrolled (per specific program criteria) in a school to work program. Initially, there were seven students who were eligible for the program, but only six were enrolled. The seventh student was not interested in the program at the time. The sixth student was dropped soon after the program began for the year because of being a constant behavioral problem. The student would not work, talked back using a disrespectful tone, repeatedly worked to unionize the other students against authority, and carried (and used) products to the facility that were illegal. After many warnings and probations went unheeded, the student was dismissed. Five students completed the program.

The students that were in this school to work program were also in the Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc. Rehab.) program. In the Voc. Rehab. program, students were allowed to work two hours a day during school hours and get paid at least minimum hourly pay. At the facility, their jobs included getting work training such as filling out applications, mock interviews, job social skills, attendance, knowledge of appropriate clothing and personal hygiene, basic math skills as related to working, job production skills, etc. To be a part of this program, students had to meet specific standards set up by the state. The person responsible for screening and placement to this facility and its program was the county Voc. Rehab. school representative.

To complement the Voc. Rehab. training, the writer recruited the services of the school to work counselor. The criteria for Voc. Rehab. participation and the school to work participation were generally very similar and the writer felt that the Voc. Rehab.

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training would make the students with special needs ideal candidates. The school to work counselor provided appropriate conferences and counseling to arrange visits in related careers, occupations, and job training. The counselor even arranged for two of the students to go on job shadowing experiences. This was an added and unexpected activity to the transition program, however, it was enjoyed and clearly appreciated by the students. One of the students, enrolled in both programs, refused to take related field trips because she feared losing money on her job at Voc. Rehab. She stated that, "I can't be out of work."

Outcome two of the practicum was not met. Only 12 teachers (includes two aides) indicated their ability to correlate at least two specific curriculum goals with the students' transitional plans. In order for this outcome to have been successful, the regular content area teachers' cooperation was needed. Initially, as the writer was explaining the reasoning behind this outcome, the teachers expressed various reserved viewpoints. The majority of the teachers were not eager to suggest curriculum goals or correlate these goals with transitions even with the writer's help. The overwhelming majority stated that they would prefer that the writer make the suggestions for the correlations, as the teachers did not feel qualified or comfortable doing so.

The writer felt that the regular teachers cooperation on this point would be pivotal. However, the writer saw no alternatives other than trying to persuade or influence the teachers to cooperate. Rather than to risk damage to the entire project, the writer at that point, conceded and wrote the content related goals that would correlate with the students' transition goals.

There could have been several reasons that the regular teachers were hesitant to cooperate on the goal. The writer had previously conducted a survey where 10 of 38 faculty members were randomly chosen to complete Special Education Department related questions. However, only nine of the surveys were completed and returned. There were several questions when considered together could lead to a conclusion that might

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explain this hesitancy on the part of the teachers. (see Table 1.) Out of nine teachers queried concerning special education courses taken, six teachers had taken no special education courses, one had taken one, and two had taken five or more. If these numbers are to be viewed as representative of the faculty, it appeared that few of the faculty members had taken special education courses to prepare them to work with students having special needs. This could be a valid reason for the content area teachers' hesitancy or refusal to correlate special education goals to content area goals.

Another reason could have been the time factor. Teachers have tremendous duties and responsibilities and do not relish the thought of readily taking on others when it is not necessary. Since the outcome read that the writer would work with the regular teachers to accomplish the task, some teachers may have decided to allow the writer to do it all. Perhaps if the responsibilities had solely belonged to the regular teachers, they would have found time to complete the task.

And finally, the writer must admit to the possibility of the teachers believing that the writer was soliciting their support for primarily selfish reasons. If this was a belief among the faculty, then this could have kept the writer's colleagues from seeing the benefits to the students with special needs. There may be other possible reasons to explain the lack of cooperation on this point. But the results would have been the same.

Since the teachers were not involved in writing the goals, they probably paid little attention to any correlations the writer made between the academic and transition goals. The writer felt that the teachers were more than familiar with the content area goals, but not the transition goals. The teachers' lack of interaction also accounted for the inability of the writer to evaluate the times that the students were exposed to the content area goals and their correlation to the transition goals. Additionally, the writer felt that the students' final assessment grades (per objective) of less than 70% could have been a direct result of the lack of teacher interaction.

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Outcome three was met. Parents of 22 of the 41 students with special needs expressed satisfaction with completed transition plans. These parents indicated their satisfaction by completing and returning a written survey. The survey had five questions. Questions one, three, and four were checked yes by all of the parents who returned forms. Question two was checked yes by 20 of the parents. Two parents indicated that they had no opportunity to give input into the transition program of their children. They did not sign the returned form and the writer had no way to make contact for a follow-up conference for the purpose of gathering more details. Question five revealed that only 15 parents felt that they possessed the ability to help their children prepare for an easier transition period. This would indicate that there is still a great need to provide as much transition help through the school curricula as possible. At the end of the year during the Annual Review meetings, each student's individual transition plan was reviewed with the parent for the present year and the next year as a part of the IEP. All of the parents, again, expressed satisfaction and freely gave any parental input.

Outcome four was met. Twenty-nine of the 41 students with special needs were able to share one educational, one career/occupational, and one social/personal transitional goal. This outcome was taught and measured by the writer. The goals were generated by the student and initially written by the student. After allowing the students to summarize their thoughts, the writer helped the students to rewrite the statements using correct spelling, grammar, and etc. if warranted.

The writer periodically reviewed and discussed the goals within the context of the instructional classes. For example, when reading and discussing about jobs or careers, the writer would bring in the students chosen/identified jobs or careers. The writer at first stated what the students had written, however, as time progressed the writer encouraged and allowed the students to state their own chosen goals. Students were tested on goals at least once per grading period. The students simply had to write the requested goal.

The writer felt that all of the students could state an appropriate educational goal. All students wanted to finish high school. However, some students went on to state that they wanted to attend a four-year college. This last statement may have been appropriate for one or two of the writer's students, but it is not a realistic goal for most. All of the students could state a realistic social/personal goal. Also here, the writer had students to continue by making statements that were considered unrealistic. The writer gave credit because one of the goals was realistic - settling down and raising a family. Acquiring credit for at least two of the area goals would enable the students to meet this outcome, for 67% was considered successful. The third part of outcome four requires more work by the writer in order for the students to be successful. Only 7 of the 29 students made realistic career/occupational goals. The students responses included aspirations of one day being doctors, lawyers, the mayor, a psychologist, a veterinarian, and etc.

The writer felt that the planned activities of academic instruction, career awareness and job training, and various related field trips were instrumental to the success of the outcomes. The program is almost assured success for the students when incorporated activities are relevant and appropriate, tailored and planned in a coordinated manner, taught using regulated and proven teaching methods, linked to specific goals, and shown to have benefits to the participants.

In pursuing the success for the stated goal through the four outcomes, the writer experienced unexpected, but positive spin-offs. An information workshop was planned for the parents of the students with special needs, however, only four parents expressed interest. The writer set up individual appointments and carried out mini-workshops. The parents seemed impressed with this follow through.

Parents were invited to participate in the transition program of their child. One parent elected to participate in three of the field trips. The parent volunteered to the writer that both child and parent were quite pleased to have had the opportunity to participate

together. The parent further stated that the child had asked and expected the parent to participate which, according to the parent, was an unusual request from the child.

The district special education coordinator was very impressed with the plans of the transition program. The coordinator not only supplied the funding to complete the transition field trip for the writer, but met on the district level, offering the opportunity for other teachers of students with special needs to participate. A schedule was drawn up so that those wishing to participate could do so. Several of the teachers participated.

At these district meetings and on a trial basis, the department decided to incorporate service learning into the district transition program. As a part of the self-contained program and with service learning at the forefront, students would be taught to carry out specific functions that would enable them to be a positive influence toward helping their community. Plans were reviewed to incorporate service learning on a wider scale at a later date.

Finally, an unexpected event that occurred as a result of the practicum was that the district coordinator responded to the Student Transition Goals Checklist by incorporating the same overall idea into the existing forms (see Appendix E). The coordinator wished to replace the information on the old form of having one overall transition goal to the idea presented by the writer's checklist of having three transition goal areas identified. The writer was delighted to share this idea. The coordinator and the department participated in drawing up the new plan and a new and more relevant cover form for student transition is now in place.

In analyzing the results of this practicum, the writer felt that the findings supported the current research concerning preparing students with special needs for transition to post-high school life. The literature suggested that there should be an on-going formal transitional program in place for students with special needs, so that they could be prepared to make the transition from school to community life more successfully. Further, this training should be very specific and helpful to the needs of the

students. Work, training, and career awareness opportunities should be varied, giving the students more than one option.

Authorities felt special education teachers should make the students' IEPs relevant and realistic. They also felt that special teachers should stay abreast of the needs of their students and watch the students' preparation for transition carefully so that changes are made when warranted. The literature also suggested leisure education, self-determination skills, job training, and career awareness become a natural part of the curriculum. If possible, the program should match interest with part-time job placement, but every effort should be made to exhibit some control over the students' working hours.

The writer believed that the solutions proposed in this practicum were appropriate for the students, relevant to the present and future needs of the students, and economical for the students and the providers of the program. The writer also felt that this transition program is based on sound and very relevant research. If the program is followed correctly, it will result in the student experiencing success in the pursuit of transitioning from the high school to the community prepared for realistic entry and survival.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested as a result of the writer's completion of this practicum. They are:

1. Teachers should be trained to ensure that students are exposed to a successful transition program. All teachers should attend workshops that would familiarize them with the specific needs of the students. The workshop should also offer them helpful techniques that could be used with students having special transitional needs.

2. Students having special needs should have transitional curricula that are inclusive of educational, career/occupational, and social/personal goals. Special education teachers have a professional obligation to write IEPs that are relevant, beneficial, and realistic. These IEPs should have many available options to reach transitional goals and should be easily adaptable in order to reflect warranted changes.

3. Students having special needs should be taught work readiness, appropriate leisure time activities, and life time skills that make them self-determining individuals. Students with special needs must be taught and exposed to appropriate learning situations. Many times an exchange of questions, answers, and explanations are needed in order for the desired learning to take place.

4. When possible, students should be given job training skills with their interests matched to job placement. Students with special needs should be enrolled in specific counseling programs so that they can receive optimum help in career/occupational transition goals.

5. Students should have many transition goal options from which to choose. Teachers should not assume that students having special needs can have no reasonable input in their transition choices.

Dissemination

The practicum results will be disseminated throughout the writer's work setting by sharing the information with the teachers, administrators, students, and parents who participated in the project. The district coordinator and the writer are discussing the sharing of the results through an inservice program at the beginning of the next school year. A copy of the approved practicum will be forwarded to the district coordinator and the district superintendent. The writer is contemplating the idea of submitting the practicum to a journal in a condensed form. Several of the students in the school to work program were featured in the local newspaper. The students were identified because of their exemplary conduct and progress made in meeting the objectives of the school to work program.

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Appendix A

Faculty Special Education Department Survey

Please take a few minutes of your time to answer the following questions. Doing so will help the Special Education Department at this school to evaluate the services for mainstreamed special education students seeking a high school diploma. The results will also be used to assist the students' teachers. At the end of six weeks, the results of this survey will be available for review in the professional section of the library.

1. How many years have you been teaching?

   _____ years

2. Do you have special education students in your classroom?

   [] yes [] no

   How many? _____

3. How many courses have you had in special education?

   /_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

   None 1 2 3 4 More than 5

4. How often do you use any special techniques with students having special needs that you do not use with other students?

   /_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

   Hardly Ever Sometimes Very Often

5. Which types of material do you use with your students with special needs? (Check all that apply.) Please circle the one that you use the most.

   [] textbooks

   [] worksheets from textbooks

   [] videos

   [] specially designed worksheets

   [] other (please specify) _____

6. From what other professionals do you seek suggestions that can be useful in helping students with special needs? (Check all that apply.)

   [] regular teachers

   [] special education teachers

   [] administrators

   [] other (please specify) _____

7. How often are you able to discuss the mainstreamed students with special needs IEP's with the special education teacher?

   [] Have not discussed IEP

   [] 1 time a year

   [] 2 times a year

   [] 3 times a year

   [] More than three times a year

8. How often do you think students with special needs would benefit from being instructed by special education teachers for every subject?

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

Hardly Ever Sometimes Very Often

9. How much training and special preparation do you feel that teachers who teach students with special needs should have?

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

No training at all Some training Extensive training

10. How useful would you find it to have mainstreamed students with special needs grouped together for instructions?

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

Not At All Useful Useful Extremely Useful

11. In your opinion, how supportive do you believe the special education program is of the regular curriculum program?

/_____/_____/_____/_____/_____/

Not at all Supportive Extremely Supportive

Appendix B

School to Work Program Checklist

School to Work Program

Name of student _____

Date enrolled _____

Dates attended ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Received career counseling ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Dates of related field trips ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ ____

Dates job training _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Dates worked _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Comments

_____

_____

_____

Signature of student _____ Date_____

Signature of counselor _____ Date_____

Appendix C

Regular Teacher's Checklist For Transition - Content Correlation

Teacher's Checklist for Transition-Content Correlation

Content area and teacher _____

Transition plans as cited by student

_____

_____

_____

Curriculum goal #1 correlated to student's transitional plan

_____

_____

_____

Dates worked on goal #1 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____%

Curriculum goal #2 correlated to students transitional plan

_____

_____

_____

Dates worked on goal #2 _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____%

Comments

_____

_____

_____

Signature of student _____ Date _____

Signature of teacher _____ Date _____

Appendix D

Parental Informal Survey

Parent Informal Survey

	Yes / No
1. Were your child's transition plans discussed with you?	/
2. Did you have a chance to have input into these plans?	/
3. Are you satisfied with the progress that has been made this year toward your child's transition goal?	/
4. Would you like something done differently for next year to help your child reach his/her goals?	/
5. Do you understand how you can help your child prepare for an easier transition period?	/

Comments

_____

_____

_____

Parent's signature (optional) _____ Date_____

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Appendix E

Special Teacher's Checklist For Student Transition Goals

Student Transition Goal Checklist

Educational goal _____

_____

Occupational/career goal _____

_____

Social/personal goal _____

_____

%

Dates teacher reviewed (oral) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Dates discussed (oral) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Dates student tested (written) _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Comments_____

_____

_____

Student signature _____ Date_____

Teacher signature _____ Date_____

Appendix F

Samples of Monthly Parent Newsletters

Date: November 12, 1996

Memo: Regarding _____'s proposed visit to College/Career Day

From: _____ and the Special Education Department

_____ needs to be exposed to all facets of transition possibilities. Whether she chooses to go directly into the world of work, prepare for a career/vocation by going through skill training, or continue her education by attending traditional college, we must help her by allowing and assisting her in actively exploring these possibilities. After exploring, a formal and very specific transitional plan must be compiled and we must all diligently and professionally do our part in helping her attain her goals. Various plans have been made this year that will help her meet her long range transition goals. They include objectives to enhance her personal, career, and educational expectations. Relevant to this proposal are her educational objectives.

On November 21 - 22, 1996, The School for the Deaf and Blind (SDB) will be sponsoring a College/Career Day. Several colleges who offer curricula that is appropriate for students who have hearing disabilities will be in attendance. If allowed to attend, this can be a positive experience for _____. We will be leaving on November 21st at 12:30 PM and returning on November 22nd at 2:30 PM.

Accommodations will be provided by the SDB. It is a two day function and _____'s teachers will be informed of her intended absences. Since this is connected directly with _____'s Individual Educational Program requirements, it will be noted that she be marked present in her classes. All of her missed work is to be made up within a reasonable time frame or as dictated by her classroom teachers.

Thank You,

(Signatures of Principal, District Coordinator, Special Teacher/the writer, student's Interpreter)

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Transition Services Field Trips
Tentative Schedule -- April 14,1997

April 26, 1997	Emerald Lanes, Greenwood 12 noon - 4:30 PM, Saturday Cost: $1.90 per game (4 can play in a game) $1.50 for required shoes Money for food
May 3,1997	Riverbanks Zoo & Gardens, Columbia 9 - 5, Saturday (Leave School At 7:30 AM -- Return Around 6 PM) Admission: $4.00 Money for food
May 10,1997	Cookout -- Lake Greenwood or State Park 12 noon - 6PM, Saturday Cost: $3.50

Parents,

Each of the above events are just fun activities planned for the students. In order to have these activities, we must have a sufficient amount of chaperones. If you can, please help us out with your presence and with the transportation to the bowling alley and the cookout. We will be using a school bus to get to the zoo. This is a great opportunity to spend time with the younger generation and just have fun. Please write me a note to let me know how and when you can help us out. I hope you can join us in all of the activities, but if you can not, we will understand and appreciate anything you can do. In the event that we can not get enough chaperones, the events will be canceled. As the dates are right around the corner, I need to hear from you as soon as possible. After I know how many chaperones we will have, I will send you a more detailed agenda for each event.

Thanks,

(Signature of the Special Education Teacher/the writer)

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